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Al battles Barry over Pope probe

WASHINGTON — A bitter feud erupted between Sen. Alfonse D'Amato and Senate Intelligence Committee chairman Barry Goldwater yesterday over the investigation of the plot to kill Pope John Paul II.

Sources told The Post last night that Goldwater had angrily blocked the New Yorker, a fellow Republican, from attending a CIA briefing on Soviet and Bulgarian links to the assassination attempt.

The flareup occurred just hours before D'Amato met with national security adviser William Clark and complained that the CIA was dragging its feet on the investigation.

Goldwater reportedly was "furious" over D'Amato's recent statements that the CIA was trying to cover up the investigation. The Arizona senator believes D'Amato is "grandstanding" and "headline hunting."

D'Amato was the first U.S. official to learn of and report the possible link between the Pope's assailant, Turkish gunman Mehmet Ali Agca, and the Bulgarian Secret Service.

By NILES LATHEM
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He reported his suspicions — based on talks with Vatican officials in October 1981 — but the CIA reportedly ignored him.

D'Amato went to Rome earlier this month to pursue the issue — only to find, he said, that the CIA was no more interested in the case then it was in 1981.

"I believe there will be a thorough review of the situation and the President himself will be involved," he said.

"Judge Clark told me the President is fully committed to seeing that this case be developed and that the truth should come out."

In a series of angry exchanges with the freshman senator yesterday, Goldwater informed him that such an issue is within the jurisdiction of the Intelligence Committee.

"Sen. D'Amato is not the only person who is concerned about this case," remarked a committee aide close to Goldwater last night.

Goldwater also was angry that D'Amato had charged publicly that an Intelligence Committee staff member was prevented from going on a recent trip with him to Italy.

D'Amato implied that CIA pressure had blocked the staff member from going along. However, committee aides say D'Amato made the request one day before he left for Rome.